Cal Grant
Grade Point Average (GPA)
Questions & Answers
for High Schools

CALIFORNIA STUDENT AID COMMISSION

Why does the Commission require a Social Security number for a GPA verification?
Cal Grant statutes require that the Commission evaluate the financial need of an eligible student by using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and select award recipients based on the FAFSA information and the evaluation of the student's grade point average. The only way to match the two independent files is through the use of a Social Security number. Currently, there is no other unique identifier that allows the Commission to match these records. Therefore, please ensure that GPA verifications submitted through the Commission's secure Web site, or on a Scantron form, have a valid Social Security number. If students don't have a Social Security number, they should address and resolve this potential problem in sufficient time to meet the Commission's March 2 filing deadline.

Who can submit and certify a GPA?
An authorized representative of any high school that is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) or that has a University of California-approved course list may submit and certify GPAs for their students. If the secondary school is not in the WASC region, another regional accrediting association may be substituted.

Whose GPA's should be submitted?
The Commission urges high schools to submit GPAs for *all* their graduating seniors.

Schools with year-round programs should ensure that their counseling programs and financial aid awareness programs address the needs of students who are not enrolled during the application periods.

In addition, since students are eligible for a high school Cal Grant Entitlement award within 18 months of graduation, schools are encouraged to submit GPAs for those students who graduated the previous year as well.

How can GPAs be submitted?
The most efficient way to submit GPAs is through the Commission's secure Web-based system. This GPA upload function provides immediate feedback regarding GPAs that have been accepted and identifies errors in the upload. School counselors may also report individual grade verifications and receive immediate feedback as they enter data online. When the online GPA function is used, GPAs are certified electronically, eliminating the need to fax or mail a Certification Form.

Verified GPAs may also be submitted on individual GPA Verification Forms.

How are GPAs calculated?
The high school GPA must be calculated on a 4.00 scale computed to two decimal places, rounded to the nearest hundredth. The high school GPA must include all coursework for the sophomore year, the summer following the sophomore year, the junior year, and the summer following the junior year.

For high school graduates who apply after the senior year, a high school GPA includes senior year coursework. In all cases, grades from physical education, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and remedial courses must be excluded. GPAs shall only include the most recent grade for any course repeated by a student.

Since the term "remedial" has not been defined by statute, schools should follow the standards used by their institution.

What if applicants don't have a GPA, or attended a high school not eligible to report verification of a GPA, or have a GPA that is more than five years old?

An applicant who does not have a GPA or whose GPA is more than 5 years old, may submit a test score from the General Educational Development Test (GED), the American College Test (ACT) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) to be considered for a Cal Grant award.

A student who does not attend a high school accredited by the WASC, or that does not have University of California-approved course work, must submit a GED, ACT, or SAT test score to be considered for a Cal Grant award.

If a test score will be submitted in lieu of a verified GPA, the student must take the test early enough to submit the results on or before the March 2 postmark deadline required by California statute. A GPA Verification Form with the student's Social Security number and signature must be attached when submitting test scores to ensure that students are considered in the award process.

For those students who do not have a GPA or high school graduation date, the Commission will use the GED test date on the California High School Proficiency Examination test date as equivalent to the date of high school graduation. However, the Commission will not accept results from the California High School Proficiency Examination in lieu of a GPA.

When should schools submit GPAs?

For the March 2 deadline, the Commission begins accepting GPAs in mid-October and urges schools to report grade point average verifications as soon as possible.

What is the deadline when March 2 falls on a Sunday or Holiday?

The statutory Cal Grant filing deadlines are March 2 and September 2 of the award year. When March 2 or September 2 falls on a Sunday or holiday, GPAs and FAFSAs postmarked or filed electronically on the next business day are legally acceptable.

When will students be notified of awards?

The Commission will begin notifying students of their Entitlement awards in mid-January. The timing of these notifications is driven by:

- The Commission's receipt of an electronic file from the federal processor of the FAFSA; and,
- Receipt of a verified grade point average for the student.

Do I need to resubmit GPAs for the September 2 Competition?

The September 2 competition is for students attending a California Community College. Students, who were not awarded during the Commission's March 2 cycle, may compete for an award during the September cycle.

All GPAs received for the March 2 deadline will be included in the September competition. If the student's GPA has changed as a result of senior year coursework, the new GPA should be verified.